



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Foreign Minister Samuel Žbogar of Slovenia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 4, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

We would like to welcome Foreign Minister Žbogar of Slovenia and thank him for his presentation of Slovenia's priorities as Chair of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. As a non-member of the Council of Europe, we found it very valuable to hear of the organization's work and your priorities.

We welcome Slovenia's intention to focus on the promotion of fundamental values common to the Council of Europe and the OSCE. We value the complementary role the Council of Europe plays to the OSCE in protecting human rights, and strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. In this regard, I very much appreciated your endorsement to the valuable role played by ODHIR and election monitoring, and your support for ODHIR's methodology and autonomy. We also share Slovenia's deep concern about discrimination, particularly against Roma and other ethnic minorities. This is why, together with Canada, we felt it was important to propose a draft declaration on incidents of violence against ethnic and other minorities at this time. We hope we can count on the support of Slovenia, and all other OSCE participating States, in this endeavor.

We support Slovenia's intention as Chair of the Committee of Ministers to strengthen security in Europe, particularly through increased attention to combating terrorism, organized crime and corruption. These are all areas where the OSCE has developed extensive experience, and where cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE has great potential.

Cooperation between our organizations also has potential in Georgia, where restoring democracy, human rights and the rule of law in all areas affected by the conflict remains critical. We share the Council of Europe's concerns about the humanitarian situation in Georgia, and join its call on all those concerned to facilitate and grant access by the international community to all persons affected by the conflict and in need of human rights protection. We also share Slovenia's regret that no agreement has been reached on a continued OSCE presence in Georgia. We agree that such a presence is essential to restoring security and stability in the region.

Foreign Minister Žbogar, thank you again for joining us today and sharing your thoughts on how the OSCE and the Council of Europe can best work together.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.